

SECOND REPORT

OF A

COMMITTEE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES

OF

New York Yearly Meeting of Friends

UPON THE

CONDITION AND WANTS

OF THE

COLORED REFUGEES.

1863.

*At the Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in New York in 1863—Sitting
of Third day afternoon, Second day of Sixth month:*

THE Report of the Committee on the Colored Refugees, as embodied in the Minutes of the Representative Meeting, being of a deeply interesting and affecting character, elicited much expression of feeling in regard to the peculiar situation of this suffering class of the human family. Fully believing that the work of charity thus detailed is but the commencement in the discharge of the great duty resting upon us, that the care of this people, although it may justly be deemed a national burden, is one in which the members of our Society can freely labor, and in which we are called upon to show to others the sincerity of our oft-repeated sympathy for the slaves, by contributing liberally of our substance for their relief, the subject was again confided to the Representative Meeting, and the members of that body were encouraged to renewed effort in the good cause.

WILLIAM WOOD, *Clerk.*

REPORT.

THE Committee on the Colored Refugees, have endeavored to give the subject committed to their charge, all the attention which appeared to be required.

In accordance with the direction of the Representative Meeting, they have printed five thousand copies of the Report of the Committee, on the condition and wants of the Refugees, and most of them have been distributed. Since then, other members of the Committee have visited Washington and Alexandria, to look after the condition of these people; and from their reports, and those of others, the Committee are gratified with the belief that substantial benefit has resulted from the care and labors of Friends on their behalf. A great improvement has taken place in the condition of the hospitals in Washington, and in other respects.

Copies of the "Address" issued by our Meeting in Tenth Month last, were forwarded to all the Meetings for Sufferings, except North Carolina. The Meetings for Sufferings in London and Dublin issued addresses to their members, asking their attention to the claims of the Refugees from slavery, and inviting them to contribute according to their ability. We have already received from them the proceeds of £446 sterling, which realized in Federal currency 3286 $\frac{8}{10}$ dollars. New England Yearly Meeting issued a similar address to its members, calling

their attention to the subject and recommending suitable liberality. We are not informed of any official action by the other Meetings for Sufferings; but at the request of various members of different Yearly Meetings a considerable number of copies of the "Address" as well as the "Report" were furnished and extensively circulated. In many Meetings subscriptions have been made and sent to the Refugees, either direct or through our aid. Friends of Indiana Yearly Meeting, as well as Ohio and Western, have sent most of their contributions down the Mississippi, where the necessity is very great, and the number of the Refugees constantly increasing.

The Committee have held weekly meetings during most of the time since their appointment, and they have devoted considerable time to the various duties which have devolved upon them. After extensive correspondence with Friends in the limits of several Yearly Meetings, in order to obtain an agent to give personal attention to the distribution of the clothing, the Committee concluded to accept the services of Harriet Jacobs—herself formerly a slave—to act as their agent at Alexandria, where she has been actively and satisfactorily engaged, since the middle of First Month of this year.

This Committee has been greatly assisted by a committee of men and women Friends of New York Monthly Meeting, from whose report we extract the following: "With the funds subscribed suitable goods were purchased and sent to our Meeting House, where a large apartment, occupied by 'Friend's Lyceum,' was fitted up as a work room. Two sewing machines were hired, with women to operate upon them, and two other machines were kindly lent by Friends for the use of the Committee.

"The work room has been open every week day from nine A.M. to five P.M. for six months, sub-committees were present daily, and were actively engaged in cutting out and sewing the garments.

"In the earlier part of the winter, clothing of thick cotton or woollen materials was made, but since the weather has been milder, lighter goods have been used.

"When Harriet Jacobs became the agent of Friends and

was stationed at Alexandria, a considerable number of garments were cut out and sent to her together with some whole pieces of printed calico, to be made up into dresses by the Refugees themselves, some of whom are neat seamstresses; and it was thought advisable that all who were capable should be taught to sew. The Committee desire to acknowledge the kind assistance in the work room, of our members and others, who have felt interested in the cause. Several destitute families in this city have been assisted through the winter by kind Friends, who have taken garments cut out by the Committee and paid the poor women for sewing them. Thus they have at the same time relieved suffering at our own doors, as well as in the camp of the colored Freedmen.

“In addition to the operations in New York, weekly meetings were held in Brooklyn, which were attended by our members, and others equally interested, to make clothing.

“The total amount of money collected in New York and Brooklyn was 5097 $\frac{84}{100}$ dollars; and the total number of garments, made up and placed at the disposal of the Committee of the Representative Meeting, was 6938.”

In addition to the clothing referred to in the above report, the Committee have received 122 packages, containing 11,586 garments of all kinds; besides a considerable quantity of piece goods, needles, and other small articles, also four cases of shoes, 48 dozen school primers, 800 Intelligent Readers, about 340 Bibles, Testaments, and other books.

These Donations were:

From contributors within the limits			
of New York Yearly Meeting,		70 cases, containing 13289 garments.	
Do New England,	41 do. do.	4758	do.
Anonymous,	5 do. do.	477	do.
Shoes, Boots, &c. . . .	6 do. do.		
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	122	18,524	

In addition to these, the Committee have purchased and sent forward considerable quantities of blankets and woollen hosiery, about twenty-three pieces of sheeting, shirting, and printed goods, to be made up by the Refugees; also bagging for straw

beds, together with thread, buttons, etc., and a supply of slates and pencils for some of the schools. Most of these articles have been forwarded for distribution to the following places:—

To Point Lookout, Md., to A. H. Gibbons,	8 cases containing 806 garments.
" Washington, D.C., to Dr. Breed and Emily Howland,	} 34 " " 4285 "
" Fortress Monroe, Va., to C. B. Wilder,	} 51 " " 5846 "
" Craney Island, Va., to Dr. Brown,	} also one box of shoes.
" Alexandria, Va., to H. Jacobs,	} 33 cases containing 3495 "
" Cincinnati, for the Refugees near the Mississippi river, to A. M. Taylor,	} also two boxes of shoes. 22 cases containing 3212 " one box of shoes.

In order to save freight some of the smaller cases received were repacked in others in which room was found for them. Thus the number of boxes was reduced.

The total amount of cash received, as per report of the Treasurer, was.....	\$10,532 25
The disbursements have been.....	8,158 23
Leaving in the Treasurer's hands.....	<u>\$2,374 02</u>

Of this amount the Committee have appropriated \$1000 for the purchase of blankets as favorable opportunities may offer. The balance is held for the purchase of supplies, as may be required for the pressing wants of the Refugees. The most urgent are in the winter; and the Committee are anxious to prepare for these during the summer months.

These contributions have been received not only from our own members, but a considerable portion from equally interested friends of the poor, who are not members of our Religious Society. One individual of the latter sent about 650 garments, all new, and nicely made in her own house, as we are informed. Several other individuals, both of our members and others, have contributed largely to the supplies of new clothing, and have thus been the means of substantial relief to the poor and destitute.

In order to show the feeling with which the contributions have been received by the Refugees, we insert the following

extracts from letters received by the Committee from the parties to whom clothing, etc., was sent for distribution.

Dr. Brown, superintendent of the Refugees at Craney Island, writes to one of the Committee, under date of 8th of 2d month, 1863, as follows:—

“I have received this day, through C. B. Wilder, superintendent of Contrabands, eight boxes and seven barrels, as per invoice of January 27, 1863. The articles are what we needed, and will, I think, be sufficient to make comfortable all of the unclothed Refugees at present upon the Island. I cannot express strongly enough my gratitude to you and the Society you represent for your timely aid; it has saved the people upon the Island an immense amount of suffering, and has saved us the misfortune of witnessing such suffering, without the means of relieving it.

“I am truly yours,
“O. BROWN.”

In the latter part of the 3d month we had an application for aid to the Refugees, to enable them to cultivate the land which had been assigned to them by Government. The following extract from a letter of C. B. Wilder, dated April 2d, will explain the condition of the farms and give an idea of the required assistance. Upon its receipt the Committee appropriated \$700, which was subsequently increased and expended for that object:

“The plantations are generally destitute of stock, tools, provisions, seeds, etc. Not a team, no provision for teams. No fences, scarcely, and therefore our necessities. I could almost say our wants in that direction are new every morning and repeated every moment. If the Government would stock the plantations, we could get on finely; but as they refuse, except to give us the use of a few old condemned army horses, but no carts, harness, or forage, we have to buy or beg for nearly all—hay, grain, tools, seeds, and provisions, until crops mature.”

The following letter from Francis T. King gives the report of a special visit to the farms, in order to obtain personal knowledge of their condition and requirements:

"BALTIMORE, 1st of 5th mo., '63.

"Our friend, Richard M. Janney, has just returned from Fortress Monroe. He visited the large farm near Yorktown, where he found two hundred acres plowed for corn and cotton, and the hands hard at work; cotton seems to be the main object, and the soil, climate, and hands are adapted to it. Richard M. Janney rode to the farm with Capt. Wilder, six miles west of the fort; he examined everything carefully, and now understands what they require. He speaks in the highest terms of Capt. Wilder, as an efficient and conscientious head of the department.

"I think R. M. Janney's visit will be of material advantage to the farming operations, in the way of filling orders.

"Thy friend,
"F. T. KING."

The following are extracts from letters of Emily Howland. They present an interesting view of the condition of the Refugees about Washington. Under date of 4th of 5th mo., 1863, she writes:—

"When I first wrote thee, the supply of excellent clothing furnished by New York Friends, and from many other quarters, seemed so ample to my inexperienced eyes that the subject did not suggest itself as a necessity. I thought the time must come when such wants would be satisfied. But that time dawns not yet. The hospitals are a heavy drain on the clothing. The small-pox especially; there are now one hundred patients there. The number has increased very rapidly in a few days. It was decreasing so much at one time, we hoped for its early entire disappearance. The great majority of cases, however, are brought from the city, as people who employ the freedmen generally send them back when they sicken.

"I think there cannot be more than sixty patients in the other hospitals, both men's and women's together. The general health of the camp is improving under the influence of pleasant weather.

"The small-pox patients are in tents, the others now occupy the pleasant new hospital buildings, which will contribute much to recovery.

"Now that the army advances, there are daily arrivals of freedmen from the front, thirty within two days; these come with only the clothing they have on, and must have a change if health and any degree of cleanliness is preserved.

"The men are mostly taken at once into Government service, leaving

the women and children dependent upon Government and charity. If it were not for this course, many families might be sent to the North and settle themselves. As it is, the women are unwilling to go so far from their husbands, and very reluctant to let their children go, as it seems a final separation to them. This is not strange; this perpetual dread of separation of family ties, has been the part of bondage most painful to its victims. All women who have no children, are eagerly sought for service in the city. Many fractions of families linger here, hoping that their friends may come to them.

"Thus it is, the camp, though daily fluctuating, numbers pretty constantly nearly a thousand.

"Among these, there must be nearly one hundred children orphaned or half-orphaned, destitute, and many helpless, old people, all entirely dependent.

"Remembering this, thou cannot but see how entirely indispensable to the lives of the poor creatures must have been your benefactions. It is impossible to express their importance, as it is to see what could have been done without them. I have sold, in all cases, where I thought there was ability to pay. In all I have received nearly one hundred dollars, and have due another hundred. I have bought some cloth and various articles which could not be obtained by other means, and still have a small sum on hand, for freight, etc.

"The warm weather will lessen the necessity for bedding. But our need of women's clothing is very great. At present, we have not a single woman's dress. We cannot but hope that the benevolence which has been so comprehensive, may not now forget us.

"The American Tract Society has nearly completed a building just outside the camp, for meetings and school. A school will be a great blessing to our little, idle children, as well as adults. * * *

"There is now some prospect of a portion of the camp, such as can labor, being removed to some safe location in Virginia, where they can work on land. If feasible, this would seem a great improvement on their present condition."

Under date of 11th of 5th month, she writes:—

"It has been my practice to put a nominal price upon articles, when the persons wanting them were at work and receiving wages. This seemed to me far better for them, morally, than to receive the articles as a gift. But, for two months past, I have sold very little, because the demands

of the sick, and fresh arrivals of the destitute, demanded all for their supply. Does that course meet the approval of your committee? Since I have been writing, heavy army wagons filled with new freed-men have passed the door. Forty have come in to-day. The scene was very interesting this evening. Many of them collected in the yard, and sung and rejoiced; the new comers found old friends who had been here some time; joyful meetings and hand-shakings were to be heard and seen. These were from Westmoreland County, Virginia. One old woman said all her owner's slaves left last night; we asked her if she was not sorry that Missus had no one to get breakfast this morning. 'No, indeed!' Then she told of her sorrows, her lashings, her fifteen children scattered and sold, and her husband sent South. But freedom made her hopeful, and she asked what they were to do here, she was ready to work."

The following extract of a letter from A. H. Gibbons, reports the condition of the people at Point Lookout, in Maryland, on the Potomac :--

"POINT LOOKOUT, 5th Mo. 5th, 1863.

"DEAR FRIEND—

"Thy letter of 4th Mo., 6th, is to hand, and should have been answered sooner, but I thought I would first appropriate the goods and then report.

"I had the barrels taken to the camp, investigated, and gave according to the needs of each; it cost much time and great labor, but was most satisfactory work. It was the first day of the week. I selected that day because I knew they would appear in their best apparel, and it would afford me an opportunity to learn who were the most destitute. I distributed all the men's and women's clothing, which fell far short; and the children's clothing was given out so far as it would go. There were many garments for young girls which were not of the right size. I think there are not more than *three* from 10 to 20, but a large number of men and women, and *little* children. Poor creatures, they bring whom they can travel with, leaving the larger children to make their way. I shall keep safely the balance of clothing for such as may come hereafter, while I shall rejoice in a further supply for men and women, and children from three months old to seven years. The clothing for small boys was appropriated, but garments for boys from eight to fourteen years of age are also greatly needed.

"I was called to the camp a few days since, to see a boy eighteen years of age: he was a well-built, handsome boy; features regular, and pleasing countenance; his mother sat by him, the picture of agony and despair, with such an expression as would move a heart of stone.

"I sat by her as her son passed quietly away; when she found him really gone, her face lighted up, and she exclaimed with wild joy, 'I thank the good Lord, he takes my poor boy from all his misery.' When all became quiet, and he was made clean and wrapped in a clean old sheet, I turned to the mother and said, 'Tell me all, how is it that this boy should suffer this terrible death? His sufferings have been very great.' She began in a subdued voice and told her story, her countenance changing with every new incident she related. Her master, who lived at Northumberland, Virginia, had beaten the boy on the top of his head, injuring the skull; he then ordered his head shaved, and covered with tar; every day he was lashed, and when the hair began to grow it was again shaved—this was done several times; he suffered with the pain in his head continually, and at length she resolved to leave three little children, and set out with this abused and suffering son. For three weeks they travelled, sleeping in the woods at night, until at length she succeeded in getting on board a *lighter* with him, and was taken to a ganboat, which conveyed him to Point Lookout. At this time he was utterly prostrated, and two days of convulsions finished his life. When he died his head was coated with tar, which his mother was unable to remove. His countenance was serene, and we could but rejoice that he had gone where the weary find rest, and the wicked could no more trouble.

"The goods were received in good condition, and correspond with the Invoice. Many expressions of gratitude are due to Friends for their generous help. The afternoon of the day (First day) that the clothes were given out, they held a prayer-meeting in the woods. I attended; three of their number prayed; they showered blessings upon the kind friends at the North, who had remembered them in their poverty, and deep affliction. They quoted Scripture with wonderful correctness, and thanked the Lord for sending 'ole Missus' to help them.

"I wish very much for dresses for women. I employ them to clean our wards, which gives me an opportunity to teach them how to work. They are now in tow and rags, excepting those who wear your contributions. Please make the dresses longer and the armholes of good size. Sacks and skirts are good. The boys' clothes were capital—shirts for boys about fourteen or sixteen are greatly needed—but of all garments,

calico dresses or something stronger are the most desirable—I should say most needed.”

Respecting the condition of the Refugees at Alexandria, we give the following extract from a letter written by Harriet Jacobs, under date of May 7th, 1863:

“I arrived here on the 14th of January. The boxes were handed over to me on the 19th of January. From that date to the 7th of May, I have given out twenty-six hundred and twenty garments, large and small, this includes stockings; seventeen hundred were given, much of this went to the hospital and to bury the dead. Nine hundred and twenty pieces were sold articles, from five cents to two dollars, the amount of money received five hundred and thirteen dollars. During the months of January and February, the condition of these people was pitiable. They had little to buy clothing with. Since that time many of them have been paid, and they buy clothing for themselves and children. Many that have work, rather pay for their clothing than have it given to them, and they value it more. Many of the Refugees have worked steadily for the Government since last October, and have not received a dollar. I have supplied the hospital entirely. Besides the goods from New York, I received from Boston two boxes and four barrels; from New Bedford, one box, and two barrels; from the Sanitary Commission at Washington, ten barrels of men’s old clothing for the Small-Pox Hospital; much of it was only fit to tear up for rags and patches. The New England boxes contained a considerable amount of bedding. One barrel contained a hundred pounds of sugar; this, with the box of farina sent by your Committee, is all the nourishment that has been sent to the sick, since I have been with them.

“I find much improvement in the condition of the Refugees. Those that have work take care of their families and send their children to school. Many of them go to a pay school, one dollar per month. There is a growing feeling of pride about many of them; they are fast losing that fear of slavery, and the mind must expand. One word that Colonel McKay said whilst here was very encouraging: he said he had never come in contact with large numbers of colored people, to study their characters. In going through the barracks he seemed surprised, and exclaimed, ‘Every face beams with goodness.’ They do appreciate what has been done for them, during the cold winter months in their suffering extremities. They often speak of it with tears in their eyes; and many

a prayer has been offered up, in our little house of worship, for God's blessing upon you all.

"We have about sixty at the hospital, twenty cases of small-pox, much typhoid fever and pneumonia; there are some that will always need help.

"For the last ten days we have been very busy. During the last engagement on the battle-field hundreds have come, more than can possibly find shelter here. I have witnessed some of the arrivals at the depot. At the sound of the whistle many an anxious heart and longing eye is seeking their friends. Here mothers find their long-lost children. Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, meet after long separation. One good old mother here found six of her children in one group. One poor mother, with seven children, was inquiring for her husband; the answer was, 'he is dead!' The small-pox has left that record for many a poor mother."

We conclude these extracts with the following from C. B. Wilder :—

"FORTRESS MONROE, May 5, 1863.

"DEAR SIR :—

"Yours is received. The ten boxes and six barrels were received per steamer Sophia, and also, I believe, all the farming tools and seeds sent per same steamer from Baltimore. I supposed they were acknowledged at the time. I mean to acknowledge every donation with a thankful heart. If it were not for them we should be powerless for good. Just think of being put in possession of forty to fifty plantations, with 50 to 2000 acres of land on each, and then 2000 to 3000 colored people, a large majority of whom are women and children, with nothing to live on and nothing to use in the way of farming utensils or teams (with very few exceptions). Being unable to get Government supplies, not knowing what to do with such a multitude, we appealed for help, and it was very generously granted by your friends, and several other associations and Friends, so that we are getting along much better than could be expected. The Government gave us the use of several old condemned horses, and have been very generous in giving us free transportation from New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Boston, and some other liberal donations last fall. With the aid you and others have so kindly given us, in *this hour of our extreme need*, we have been doing wonders; and had we a sufficient team force, we could do four-fold more at least. We have just made a new requisition for fifty more

old horses, and if we get them we shall be able to enlarge our operations a good deal yet. We had bought one ton of cotton-seeds, and the Government have given us fifty barrels more, which we expect to put into the best lands. Also, we have bought 300 bushels corn, several hundred bushels potatoes, with very large supplies of garden seeds given us, all, or nearly all, of which we expect to get in before it is too late. On a few of the plantations they are expecting to raise very large supplies of tobacco. Our chief distress is for want of forage and provisions, all of which we expect will be returned and paid for when the crops are gathered. And if the season is good, and we are not plundered by one or the other of the armies, or rebels, we may expect something handsome from our efforts and sacrifices. We keep an account with each plantation, Dr. and Cr., and expect to show, notwithstanding our drawbacks and discouragements, two things: 1st. That the freedmen are capable and anxious to work and support themselves, not only, but will be a source of immense wealth to the State and nation if reasonably encouraged; and 2d. That without such encouragement and assistance they must become beggars and paupers. The amount of farming utensils and provisions which we have had to buy or beg has been very large, and what we are to do for supplies for the next three or four months we are at a loss to conjecture, though we have faith to believe that He that has begun a good work will not suffer it to utterly fail, though the instruments and agents may fall by the way. I should be glad to give you more particulars, but excessive duties must be my excuse.

“Very truly yours,

“C. B. WILDER,

“Capt. and A.Q.M.”

It has been a pleasure to the Committee to distribute the articles sent to them for that purpose, and in doing so they have endeavored to conform to the wishes of the donors, so as to accomplish the greatest relief. The Committee would suggest to all contributors the importance of sending a list of the contents, and marking the outside of the packages, so that on their arrival they may be readily recognised as referring to the lists previously sent. By attention to this practice the Committee will be spared the labor of examining them.

The Committee have been gratified in reading the reports of the Freedmen's Association, and also of the Contrabands' Relief

Committee of Cincinnati, whose operations, though very extensive and far exceeding our own, are spoken of by themselves as "but a drop in the bucket." It may be some encouragement to us to know that they who have witnessed the distress and necessities of the Refugees, and are most familiar with them, are the most zealous and urgent for continued and more extensive relief.

In conclusion, the Committee may acknowledge that they have been favored with many interesting meetings, and with entire unanimity and harmony in the discharge of the duties which have devolved upon them. They are united in opinion that this interesting concern should still claim the care of the Representative Meeting. The Committee desire to encourage Friends everywhere to renewed efforts and contributions, as they may be able, in order to mitigate and relieve the distress of the poor and the needy.

On behalf of the Committee,

EDWARD TATUM,

Clerk.

NEW YORK, Fifth Month, 27th, 1863.